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Welcome To Fort Qu'Appelle Saskatchewan



FORT QU'APPELLE — A BRIEF HISTORY

Fort Qu'Appelle played a considerable part in the history of the western prairies. Early free traders and employees of the small trading companies visited this area as early as 1750. David Thompson the great explorer and geographer, drew a map of the Qu'Appelle some 160 years ago. The Hudson's Bay Company records refer to trade with the Indians of the Qu'Appelle Lakes since 1812. A frontier post was built north of the valley about this time which was later destroyed. References have been made to a mission church of the Church of England built by a Cree Indian known as Mr. Pratt about 1857. A trading post was built on the site of the town of Fort Qu'Appelle by the Hudson's Bay Company about 1864, set in the midst of a flourishing fur trade area. It was also the centre for making of pemmican and distributing it to the scattered trading posts in the west. During the Indian and Metis uprising in 1885, General Middleton, in command of the forces sent to subdue the rebellion, chose Fort Qu'Appelle as his headquarters and the small school building in the fort was taken over as his headquarters. This building still stands on the grounds of the original trading post. This has been designated a National Historic Site and is set up as a museum show piece attached to the Fort Qu'Appelle Centennial Museum. Although violence threatened in 1885, there was no actual fighting during the uprising.

On the present golf course is a cairn erected in 1955 on the location of the North West Mounted Police Post built in 1877. The post was disbanded 10 years later.

In 1874 at Fort Qu'Appelle, the Cree and Saltoux Indians signed a peace treaty with "The Great White Mother," Queen Victoria, giving up their rights to 75,000 square miles of the province in return for TREATY RIGHTS; this following days of powwowing with the tom-toms beating and dancers circling the campfires. A monument has been erected to mark the signing of the treaty and on this monument are listed the names of the signing chiefs, the representatives of the government and the Hudson's Bay Company.

THE LEGEND OF THE QU'APPELLE VALLEY

Pauline Johnson, in her lovely poem "The Legend of Qu'Appelle," tells the story which the Indians have related as to how the Qu'Appelle Valley received its name.

Many years ago, a young French fur trader spent a winter in the valley area. During this time he fell deeply in love with a beautiful Indian girl. When spring came, it was necessary for him to travel to Montreal with his furs. The sweethearts promised that on his return they would be married.

The young man made the long trip east, and now was returning to his sweetheart. Paddling up the Qu'Appelle River he reached the chain of lakes which we know as The Qu'Appelle Lakes. It was a clear, bright, fall night with the moonlight white on the hills of the valley. He was hastening to cover the remaining miles to the Indian encampment on the lake shore. As he paddled up the lake he suddenly heard a voice calling his name. Puzzled, he rested his paddle — all was silence. He called out in reply "Qu'Appelle?" (who calls). His only answer was the echo of his voice from the surrounding hills. "Qu'Appelle — Qu'Appelle?" he called. Suddenly alarmed and uneasy, he increased his speed and the canoe sped through the water. Three times he heard his name and three times he answered "Qu'Appelle?" Each time only the hills replied. Finally he could see the campfires of the Indian Village on a point of land. The Indians came down to meet him and told the heartbroken man that his sweetheart had become very ill, but before she died three times she had called his name.

Perhaps on a clear silent moonlight night, the echo of his words "Qu'Appelle" may still be heard by the listener with a keen ear.

Two of the lakes are named from this story. Farthest west is PASQUA, named for an Indian Chief. Next is ECHO LAKE, from the legend. MISSION LAKE named for the early church mission founded at Lebret. Finally KATEPWA LAKE an adaptation of an Indian expression meaning "Who Calls?"

